



Southern New England— New York Bight

Coastal Ecosystems Program



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The Southern New England-New York Bight Coastal Ecosystems Program

- identifies important fish, wildlife and plant populations, especially federal trust species;
- identifies significant habitats requiring immediate and long-term attention; and
- seeks opportunities to protect, enhance and restore priority habitat areas and species populations throughout the program area.

The program area (see map, reverse side) ranges from Cape Cod, Massachusetts, to Cape May, New Jersey, and includes the New York City metropolitan area.

Why We Choose to Care

This area provides essential habitat for many commercially and recreationally valuable freshwater, coastal, and marine fish and invertebrates. The Connecticut River and Hudson River drainages support nationally important runs of anadromous* fish such as Atlantic sturgeon, American shad, striped bass,

river herring, and endangered shortnose sturgeon. The lower Connecticut River is an especially important area for young salmon migrating to the ocean and for returning adult salmon.

Shorebirds, wading birds, raptors, songbirds and waterfowl find important nesting, migratory stopover and wintering areas throughout the region. Coastal bays and nearshore waters sustain large numbers of sea ducks, bay ducks and colonial waterbirds as well as several species of seals, sea turtles and cetaceans. In addition, the area's freshwater and tidal wetlands communities contain many rare and endangered plants, and they provide essential habitat for several federal trust species.

Why We Need to Help

During the past 300 years, human actions in the region's coastal areas have led to the loss or decline of many species through destruction of wetlands and other important habitats; overharvesting of resources; numerous forms of pollution; and most recently exotic invasive species.

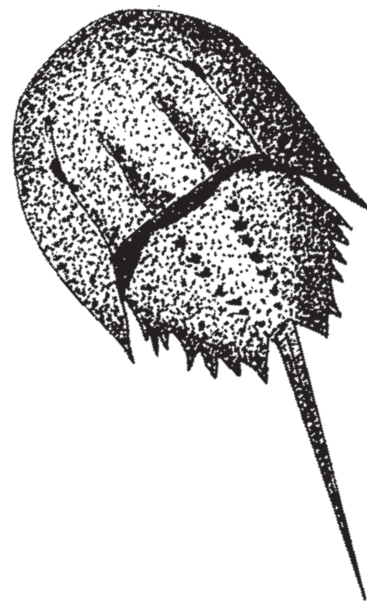
- 1. Destruction of wetlands.** Coastal and wetlands environments are radically altered and destroyed by commercial, residential and infrastructure development. Wildlife is left with nowhere to go.
- 2. Overharvesting of resources.** A number of commercially and recreationally important fish are classified as overfished, such as Atlantic cod, white flounder, yellowtail flounder and tautog.
- 3. Pollution.** Urban and suburban sewage treatment plants, chemical and fertilizer runoff from upstream areas, heavy metals in New York/New Jersey harbor, oil and chemical spills

throughout the coastal zone, PCBs in Buzzards Bay and the Hudson River, and toxins and pathogens in the New York Bight -- all of these pollutants further stress and injure the area's terrestrial and aquatic ecosystems.

- 4. Exotic invasive species.** Human activity such as shipping and landscaping often brings new species into an area. These introduced species often out-compete native species and wreak havoc on the habitat.

What We Do to Help

The Southern New England-New York Bight Coastal Ecosystems Program staff uses its expertise to help to protect, enhance and restore priority habitats by identifying natural areas of regional significance, recommending effective actions and strategies, partnering with stakeholders to make sure projects are funded and executed efficiently, and working with the public to educate and involve citizens in the protection of their coastal areas.



*Anadromous fish begin their lives in fresh water and then swim to salt water, returning to spawn in fresh water.

The Southern New England-New York Bight Coastal Ecosystems Program office, located in Charlestown, R.I., conducted the Northeast Coastal Areas Study identifying and promoting protection of regionally significant habitat areas for fish, wildlife, and plants throughout the northern section of the program area. The office also completed a similar ecosystem-scale assessment, the Significant Habitats and Habitat Complexes of the New York Bight Watershed, to identify restoration opportunities and recommend specific actions to protect and conserve federal trust species and their regionally significant habitats.

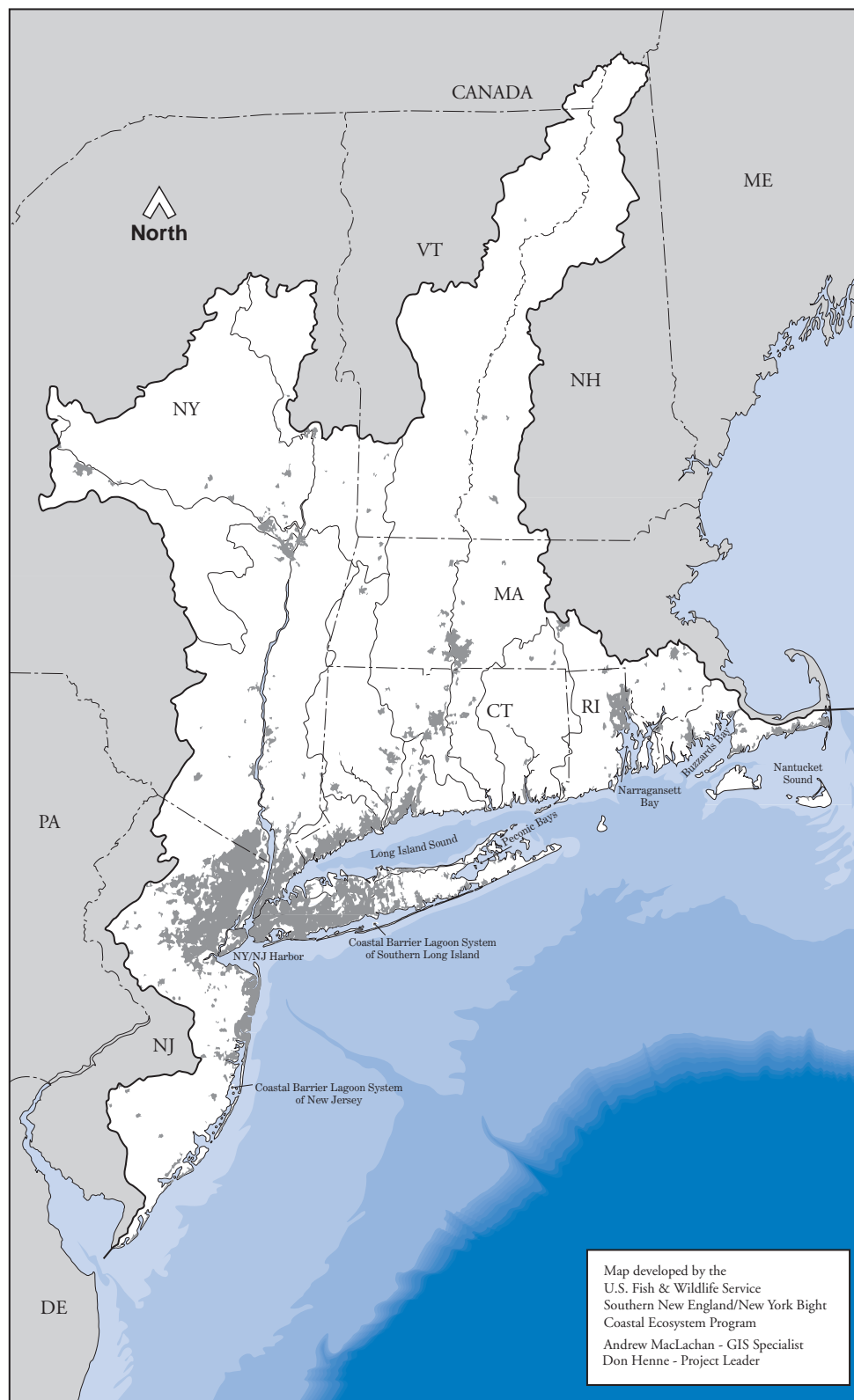
The National Coastal Ecosystems Program was initiated to integrate the various Service programs affecting conservation of coastal living resources and to provide an ecosystem perspective on the living resources of the nation's bays, estuaries and coastal watersheds.

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The area is an interconnected system of marine and fresh waters, coastal lands, and extensive upland watersheds.

The region's largest estuaries include:

- Nantucket Sound
- Buzzards Bay
- Narragansett Bay
- Peconic Bays
- Long Island Sound
- New York-New Jersey Harbor
- Coastal barrier lagoon system of New Jersey
- Coastal barrier lagoon system of southern Long Island